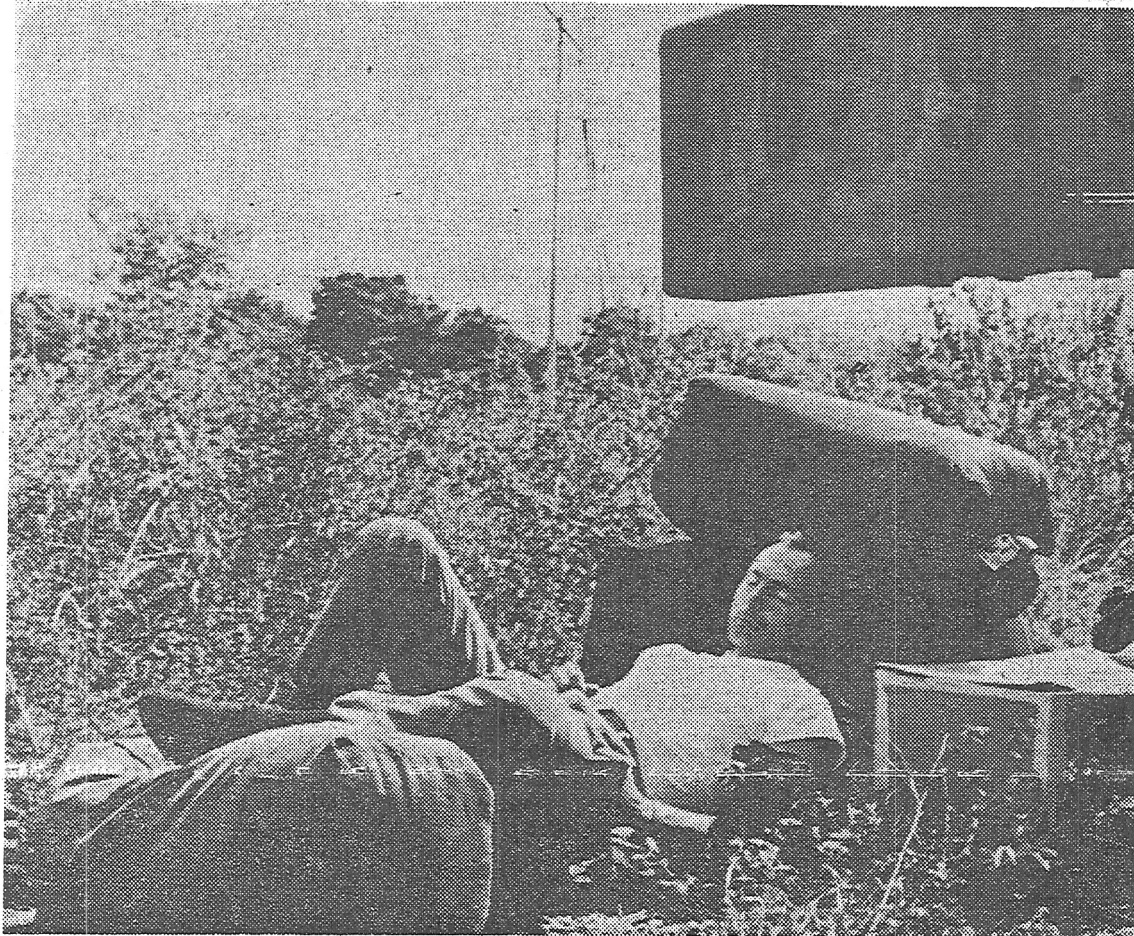


The Washington Post

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1978



United Press International

American soldier rests in Guyana after helping in gruesome task of shipping bodies to United States.

GIs Fly Home After Clearing Cult's Camp

By Fred Barbash

Washington Post Staff Writer

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, Nov. 26 — The 200 U.S. troops who cleared the bodies of more than 900 participants in a mass suicide ritual from the Jonestown encampment of the Peoples Temple cult began flying home this morning.

Uniforms, boots and tents that had come in contact with the bodies were burned, and the massive concentration of helicopters, forklifts, cargo planes, jeeps and trucks was readied for shipping back to the United States.

The troops also formally concluded their vain search for more survivors of the mass deaths at Jonestown last Saturday.

"We made every effort to locate possible survivors," said Col. William I. Gordon, the commanding officer here. "And if there had been anything alive, I believe we would have found them."

He called the recovery of the bodies "perhaps the most difficult thing we've ever had to do."

The departure of the troops and many of the reporters who were covering the story was the beginning of the end of an abrupt and heavy American presence in this poor South American nation that is no bigger than Idaho.

It began with the assault last Saturday that killed Rep. Leo J. Ryan (D-Calif.) and other members of the party that had come to inspect the Rev. Jim Jones' community about 120 miles northwest of here. It escalated dramatically following the mass suicide ritual led by Jones Saturday evening.

At Jonestown, Guyanese police began setting up a fully equipped police station to control access to the camp site until a decision is made on what to do with it.

Government spokesmen said they had no intention of allowing any more Peoples Temple operations there. Nor would they permit any other foreign group to settle at the site, they announced.

The government was still detaining 78 members of the Peoples Temple cult who either escaped before the deaths at Jonestown or were residing at the Temple's headquarters here in Georgetown, Guyana's capital.

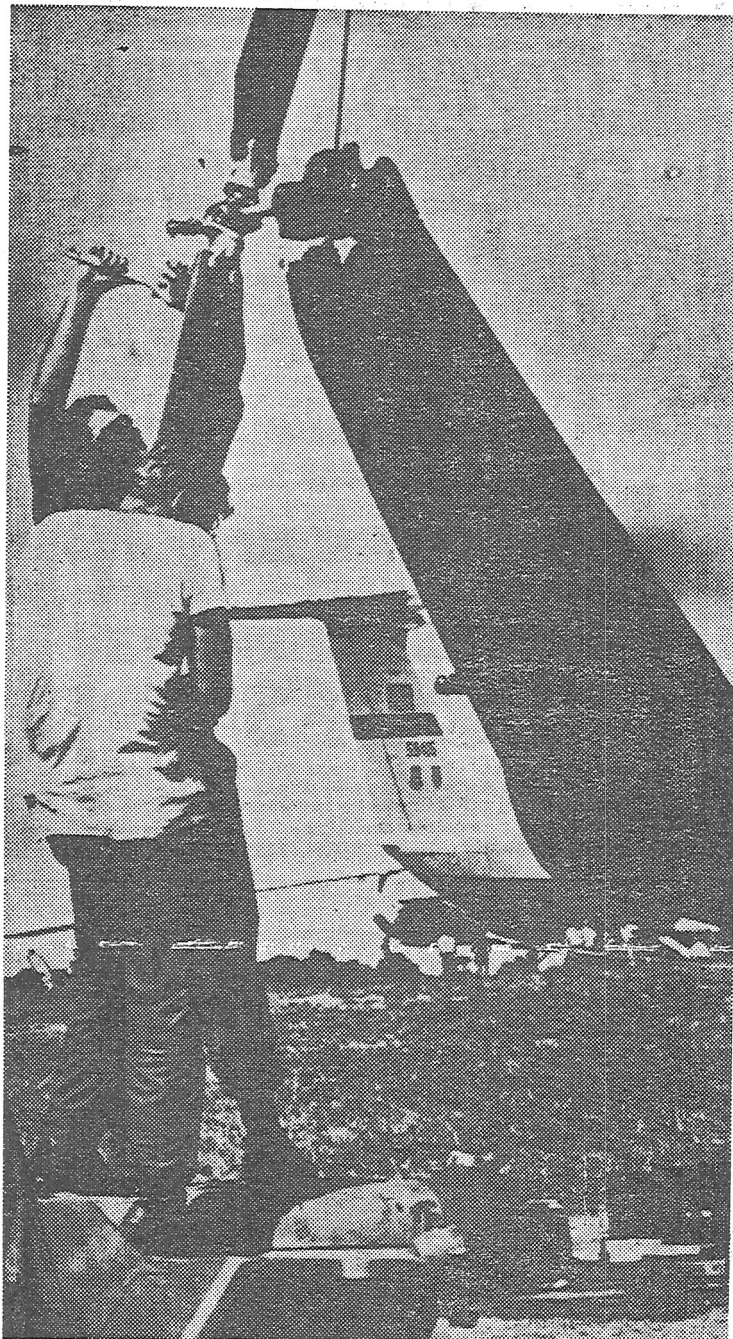
Some of them are expected to be charged with conspiracy in connection with four murders at the cult's headquarters last Saturday. Others are considered material witnesses to that crime and to the attack on Ryan's party.

The number of those who died in this country as a result of the series of events was 918, according to authorities. One Jonestown resident was killed at the Port Kaituma airstrip as she sought to escape with Ryan. Four members of Ryan's party, including the congressman, were killed in the same attack.

Four Peoples Temple members, a mother and her three children, died after their throats were slit at the Georgetown headquarters at about the same time the suicides were occurring in Jonestown. Three persons, including Jones, died of gunshot wounds at the camp.

And 906 men, women and children were said to have died after drinking Kool Aid laced with cyanide and sedatives on Jones' instructions.

See GUYANA, A18, Col. 1



Associated Press

Helicopter is dismantled for shipment home after ferrying bodies in Guyana.

U.S. Troops Return Home After Clearing Jonestown

GUYANA, From A1

A brief but heated dispute broke out last night when Guyanese authorities deposited some of Jones' former top lieutenants at the hotel where people who had attempted to escape Jonestown before the suicides were staying.

Some survivors at the hotel threatened to jump off the balcony before they finally accepted the presence of the newcomers.

As the U.S. soldiers involved in the Jonestown operation marked the end of their gruesome mission here, last night, by drinking beer at their camp near the airport, one was said to have broken into tears.

Generally the soldiers were said to have performed remarkably smoothly under the grim circumstances. Only one or two cases of minor illness were reported by the soldiers as they removed hundreds of bloated and decomposing bodies.

Some said they had done this sort of work after disasters or during wars.

"You get used to it," said Staff Sgt. Glenn Hoover.

One officer said he was struck by the number of troops assigned to other tasks who volunteered when extra assistance was needed with the bodies.

"This operation is completely unprecedented," said military spokesman Capt. John J. Moscatelli. "None of us has ever been involved in something as massive as Jonestown. Obviously, it was a very distasteful task, not pleasant for anybody."

Authorities here would provide no estimate of the cost of the mission. It required the use of 48 C141 cargo jets, 105,000 pounds of fuel, midair refueling equipment, 19 forklifts and three military encampments used as staging points for the transfer of bodies.

The final shipment of corpses, the last 184, was flown to Delaware early this morning, Moscatelli said. Because many of those discovered under the mounds of bodies were children, Moscatelli said they were able to fit all 184 into only 86 aluminum boxes.



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U.S. troops prepare gear for flight back to United States after clearing Jonestown.